



From September 2017 (Volume 79)





Photo History

A lovely hot September day and we took the train to sunny Brighton



Fish and chips on the beach
freshly cooked in the pop-up
fish 'n' chip
stall...that's
about as
good as it
gets



The sad shell of
the old burnt-
down pier





The great iconic London skyline with silhouettes of commuters on Cannon Street Station above the Thames





Camden Colours



Photo History



Subtle they aint





Photo History



Life's a beach



The real flower power





Photo History



Photos from TV of the Cross-rail tunnel, a very important part of the new London transport system



A wonderful evening at The Regent's Park Open Air Theatre—On The Town



Interesting use of an old London public convenience



Photo History



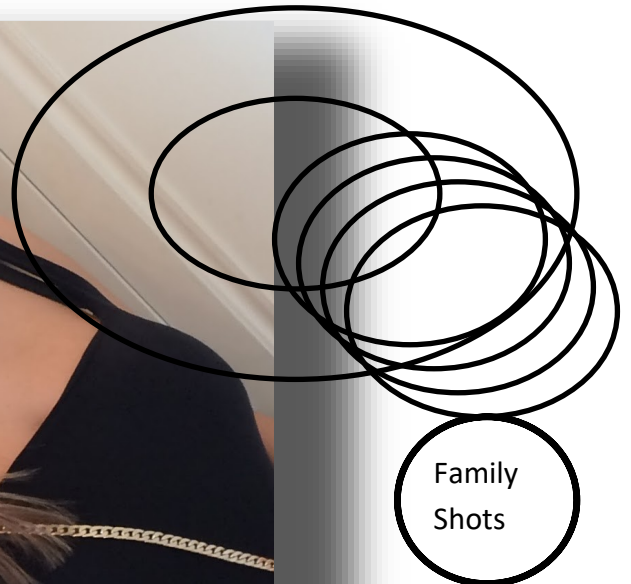
Family shots







Photo History





Family Shots





Photo History



Around Bristol





Photo History









Off beat shots





“...Yes, I know I have loads of street art shots everywhere, but these Bristol street shots are so great that I had to include a few. Believe me, there are loads more and I had to select ruthlessly “

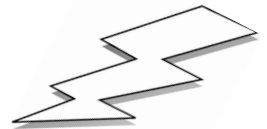
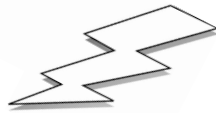
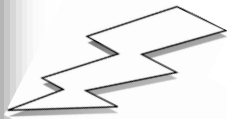








Photo History











This is my work of art









...by now you are probably totally bored (or, hopefully, you enjoyed these last few shots) ...I personally love them.....but possibly that message already came through loud and clear.....Anyway, on with some different shots





Still in Bristol, The St. Werburgh's City Farm and the great café are like an oasis in a busy city and are well patronised by the locals



Family Shots



Photo History



Extract from The Independent in 2007

As you travel by train through Bristol there is one area that stands out from all the city's terraces, graffitied walls and gritty flyovers. It nestles in a green bowl – a patchwork of allotments, a mini nature reserve, a city farm and, at the bottom, a collection of surreal-looking houses made of copper, wood and glass in strange shapes, glinting with solar panels. This oasis of calm is Ashley Vale, a collection of 26 eco-houses that were designed and hand-built by local residents in response to a developer attempting to take over a brownfield site in the St Werburgh's district. This is where DP lives and Jackson and Anna are delightful friends

The project began in 2000 when a developer proposed turning a scaffolding yard into a housing estate. Local residents banded together and formed AVAG, the Ashley Vale Action Group, to oppose the development and put forward their own, alternative, vision. They won their case – and the right to build a sustainable, mixed-use community on the yard – but had to work quickly to buy the land.

The idea was to divide the two-acre plot into 26 and sell each section individually. Jackson Moulding, now a self-build consultant, and his partner, Anna Hope, were among the original residents who opposed the developer but hadn't thought about buying a plot themselves. "I got involved because I was working in environmental areas and wanted to push whatever happened here to be sustainable," says Moulding, "I wasn't there to build my own house, but then thought I should be involved." Moulding and Hope were among the last people to end up with a plot of land – one of the smaller sections in an awkward wedge-shape they have turned to their advantage.

Once all the land had been bought, the self-builders formed a co-op and met three times a week for over a year to design houses with their neighbours-to-be. The first problem they faced was that the plot was covered in concrete, which would be difficult to remove and result in landfill. So they decided to keep the concrete and treat it as a raft, building timber frames on top. Everyone had to design their houses themselves. "I read lots of books and doodled on beer mats," says Jonnie Brockwell, an engineer. Hope and Moulding built a very cute balsa model and Ian and Jane Coles, who work for Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, "drew it out on squared paper and paced up and down other people's houses to find out how big they were".

Most people had no or little building experience, nor were they primarily motivated by the idea of creating their own eco-houses. Moulding, like most of the self-builders, says, "We couldn't even afford to buy a small terrace house in this area – but we knew we could afford a bigger house if we designed and built it ourselves." Ian Coles says: "It was a very steep learning curve. I went from having an IT job to being in charge of a building site."

At the time, there was a lot less information about building eco-houses than there is now, so the process involved a considerable amount of research and trial and error. Having a group of people all wanting to build in roughly the same way made it easier. As well as the timber frames, most used Fermacell boards instead of plaster board (they're made with gypsum and cellulose from recycled paper). The cavity walls were filled with Warmcel – made from newspaper – and many of the double-glazed windows came from Rationel, a Dutch firm that only uses sustainable timber.

Bedrooms are on the ground floor with the living spaces above to maximise warmth in the sitting and kitchen areas and keep the bedrooms cool. Most houses have underfloor heating and all but one have solar panels. The houses are so well insulated that residents are able to sell solar electricity to the grid. The houses are built around a central plot that functions as a community green and recycling centre. The south side of the roofs hold the solar panels, but are short so that they don't block neighbours' light; the north sides are long and without windows to give the neighbour on the other side some privacy.

During construction, most people lived in caravans on site. Building their own house at weekends and in the evenings meant a long stay for most residents. Jonnie Brockwell was in his caravan for nearly three years and was one of the last people to move into his house. "It was a fantastic feeling," he says. He moved, however, into the only room that was semi-finished, the back bedroom, which contained a sink, a Baby Belling and a stopcock tap....The group agreed that they would use material from the Bream Guide to Sustainable Building Material that had been given an A rating for sustainability. However, B-graded materials could be used with permission from the group. Some people wanted to use only local materials. These differences of opinion resulted in compromises that rankled with some members. For instance, the house next door to Moulding's has been built higher and placed further back than was originally agreed, which blocks some of the light and the view. Only four houses on site have solar hot water systems. "A lot of us were slightly remiss about solar hot water," says Coles, "I've left space for it on the roof, although it would have been easier to install at the time. My budget simply didn't stretch to it."



Photo History



"You can't enforce these rules and you don't want to upset people." They are also annoyed that some people built larger houses than they needed but again, as Hope points out, "People imagined that they were going to stay here for a long time so they wanted to build big homes for their future children and so their parents could live with them later. It's a trade-off between these desires and green issues."

Brockwell agrees, saying, "It's important to give people their individuality. We got very good at chairing meetings – although most disputes were sorted out in the pub." Coles adds: "There were lots of big characters and everyone wanted a say. But we ended up with everyone being allowed to express their individuality. If we hadn't had that flexibility the project would have failed."

The result is a collection of unusual houses: most have outer timber walls and large verandas. Moulding's, built like a wedge of cheese, has a seaside feel with wood across the front. Upstairs, it opens out and is full of light and space: there's a portal glittering with blue LEDs leading into a study area, while downstairs the bed is semicircular, built into the wall. One house is boxy and bright yellow; a semi-detached is copper verdigris and there's a terracotta terrace with Swiss-style balconies dripping with nasturtiums.

When asked whether he would do anything differently, Coles cites Brockwell's house as a good example: on the south wall is a beautiful two-storey conservatory that encloses a veranda on the second floor. It's screened by vines in summer and acts as a passive solar source, warming the house in colder months and releasing heat in summer. Moulding is disappointed he wasn't able to make his house completely carbon neutral: "Anna and I put a huge amount of work and thought into this house, but on an overcast day, we have to use gas for hot water. But it is built to a high environmental standard and there are thousands of houses being built now that don't incorporate environmental criteria into their design."

Perhaps even more importantly is the solid sense of community that building the site has created. "It's like a soap opera," says Coles. "It's not a place to live if you're quiet and introverted." He and his partner love it: "Our neighbours are our friends, we have common interests and do things together – it feels like home."





The Church at St Werburgh's has been converted to a 12-metre climbing walls, pillars, fins, overhangs and arches, plus a bouldering area and tuition.





We all walked around St Werburgh's and after a climb in the nature reserve to see the view over town we enjoyed a great veggie pizza and take home



The railway tunnel into St Werburgh's has become a well-known area for graffiti artists from around the world to come and display their talents

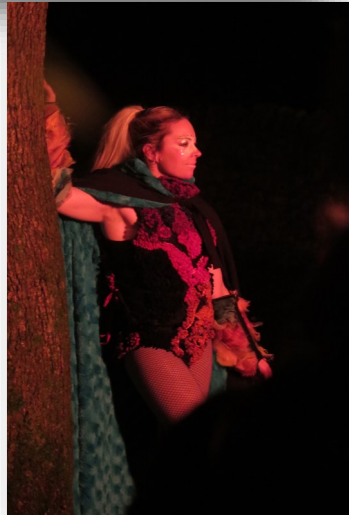
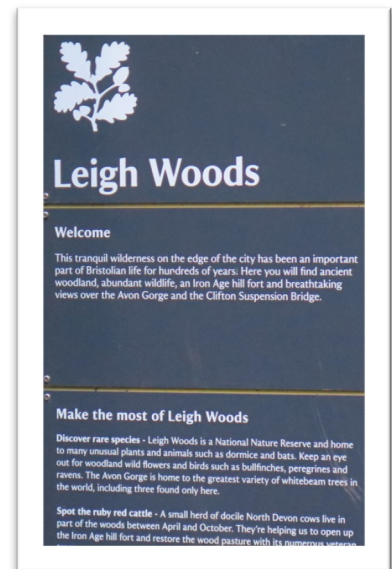


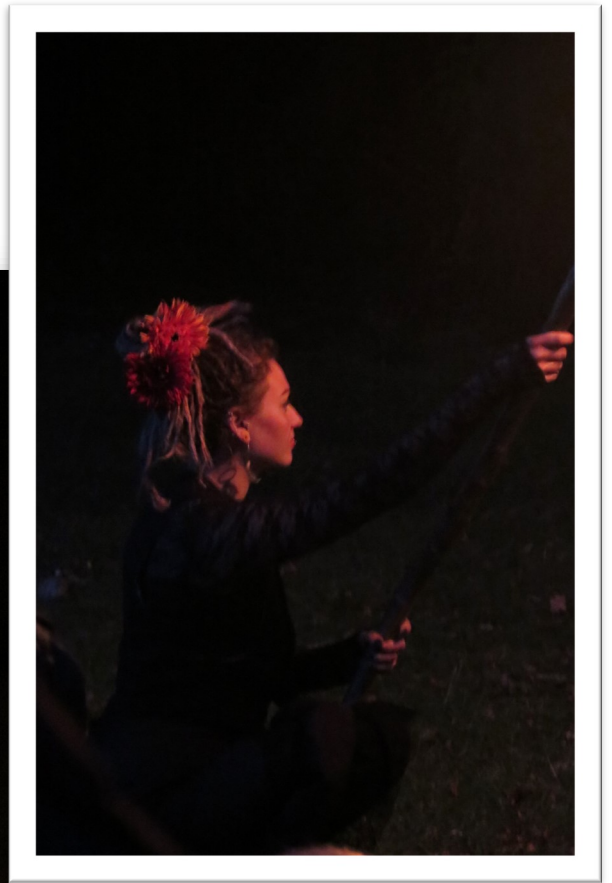


Photo History



Some friends of DP put on a really atmospheric show in Leigh Woods at night. Parents with kids were met by the storytellers who led us all deep into the woods where the story was acted out with tree trapeze acts and music all lit by burning wooden torches. The kids were totally mesmerised (as indeed were we). It was a very novel and fascinating experience and I emailed them a note of our appreciation the following day







In September 2017 we had a wonderful buffet lunch with Leon & Sue at The Ned in The City. The 'feast' as it was correctly named was lavish and the service was excellent. It hasn't been open long and if it continues like this it will be a real winner

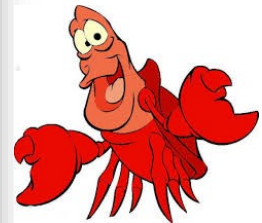
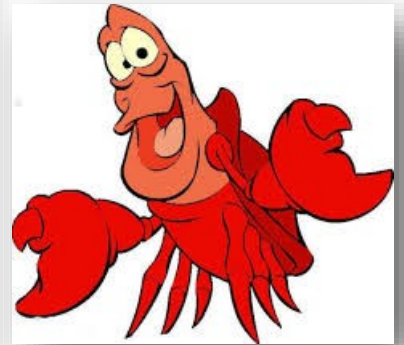
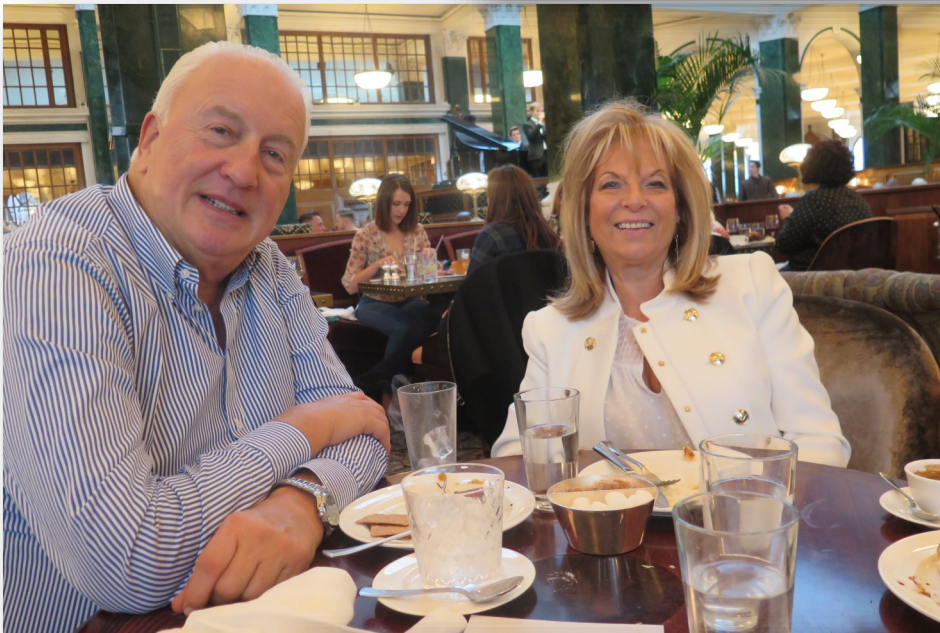




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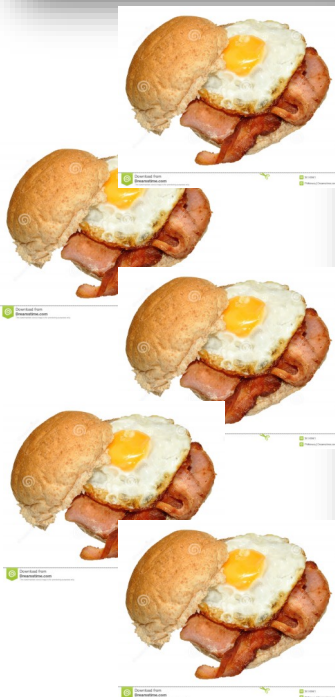








September 2017. Evie and Jim and Andrea came with us for a walk along the River Lea from Stamford Hill (where we enjoyed the obligatory 'bacon sarnie') and along the tow path to Stratford where we found deckchairs and relaxed with a smoothie alongside the Olympic Park





NB: The hardback book that I have finished actually comes in at this point. This is the hardback called 'Around Brick Lane'

While we were in Brick Lane we met Tim who was doing some great street art and we discussed the possibility of him creating some wall art at home for us based on some ideas that would give him. After his wife giving birth to 'Zephyr' he was free to come up from Bristol to 'draw on our walls' as he put it



The 'blank canvas'



After Lynn and I decided on the concept we discussed it with Tim who produced a black and white image that he superimposed on the photo of the wall I had emailed across to him. We then chose the colour palette we wanted and he then drew the outline on the wall





Obviously nothing starts without the 'cuppa and a biscuit'



It very quickly took shape before our eyes and it was fantastic to see our ideas and concept actually put into such a wonderful artistic reality





Photo History

To give an extra dimension to the glass ornaments
Tim sprayed some of the same colour palette at the
back of the alcoves where they are displayed

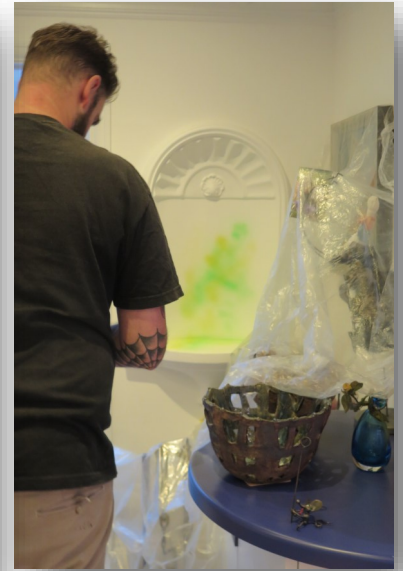
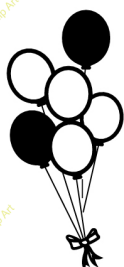
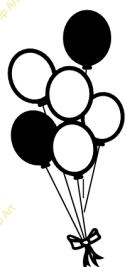
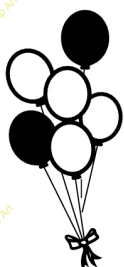
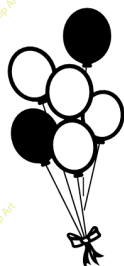
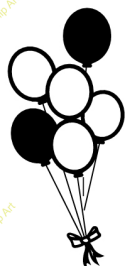
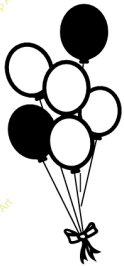
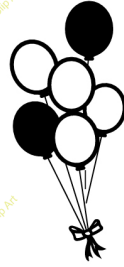




Photo History



Up, up and away





October 2017

Postscript.

We have travelled a lot this year and had real fun with diverse experiences. The distance travelled does not necessarily make for better vacations but we have seen very different cultures and experienced totally different environments, even in the same country. I think our way of travelling is possibly unique and I know many of our friends would not enjoy the 'unknown' nature of our travel but we both find that having a broad picture of what we would like to see and then planning local ways to get there allows us to experience the 'real' country and has given us many enjoyable experiences and very very few unpleasant ones. The joy of finding new places and not meeting other tourists overshadows the difficulties in getting there. Travelling light (by the standards of our friends), namely with just two cabin cases plus, maybe, a backpack, has allowed us to be more flexible and even sitting in launderettes in different towns is enjoyable. These Photo History books are great 'memory-prodders' and probably when we are too old to travel to distant shores we may be able to sit and enjoy the memories...or possibly we will have lost our marbles and don't remember ever going there...who knows..

Our family are great. We keep in close touch with all of them and recently we have renewed contact with the Canadian branch (Hoffmans) so I will try to keep up this stream of family linkage. Our Berlin and Israeli family are often in touch and I get emails and Whatsapps from some of them. I find as I get older this family bond becomes more important and our family over here are always in close touch so this makes us very happy.

Tammy and DP are in touch all the time and we have a lot of laughs together. Larnie, now in her own student room at uni. emailed me yesterday to check on how to cook a pasta dish and actually posted a home-made crisp video with a tribute to granddad...that's really great. Peachy constantly sends short audio messages, pictures and texts on Whatsapp and we have a laugh together on line. Rey (Renana) texts me from Berlin and from the beach in Israel and keeps in touch. I have a great laugh when walking with my friends on our monthly 'Gentleman's Walking Club' excursions. There are about 18 of us now but it averages around 10 people (plus dogs) on the 6-8 mile walks ending with a great pub lunch. It is very informal and most enjoyable. Likewise Lynn and I seem to have enlarged our circle of friends and we have many dinner parties here or at their houses plus theatre visits and walks, meals out etc.

I think the interaction with others is what we find the most enjoyable part of our retirement and we both can say we really enjoy this stage of our life